

Appendices to  
“Male Body Hair Depilation in Jewish Law”  
by Steven Adams

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Appendix A

Southern Arabia

The geonim reported that not all male Arabs followed the same personal grooming standards. Sherira and Hai specifically named tribes in Arabia, including the Qahtanites, the Arab clans of Yemen,<sup>1</sup> who considered the removal of body hair a distinctively feminine value:

Even in modern times there are people in Arabia, those of the Arabs, sons of Ishmael and sons of Yaktan, that their culture is such that were a man to remove his pubic and axillary hair he would be viewed as weak like women. [Jewish] men living in those [Arabian] countries are forbidden in these times from depilating their body hair.<sup>2</sup>

The geonim therefore ruled that it was forbidden for Jews living amongst the Qahtanites to shave off this hair. Almost as if time had frozen for a thousand years, contemporary Yemenite rabbis report the same practice of Jewish males. This recent rabbinic literature indicates that local gentile custom was still for men to not shave<sup>3</sup> and the Yemenite Jewish community acted accordingly.<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly, Yemenite scholars were

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<sup>1</sup> De Lacy O’Leary, *Arabia Before Muhammad* (London: Routledge, 1927), p. 17. Perhaps these Arabs, though Muslim since the 7<sup>th</sup> century, did not accept the relevant cited hadith as authentic.

<sup>2</sup> *Orzar ha-Geonim, Nazir* 58b, pp. 199-200:  
"... ואף עד עכשיו יש בערב מי שהם בין בני הערבים בני ישמעאל ובני יקטן שמנהגם כן כי הגבר לעבירו (=להעבירו) בית השחי ובית הערוה חלש רואים אותו כנשים ואנשי אותם מקומות עכשיו אסור להעביר בית השחי ובית הערוה שלהם."

<sup>3</sup> See “The Gulf and Saudi Arabia,” *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures, Volume III: Family, Body, Sexuality and Health*, ed. Suad Joseph (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 35, that modern men “trim body hair with razors, women wear long hair and depilate using halawa, a lemon-sugar paste, or depilatory creams and sprays, but do not shave.” However, the Arab states of the Persian Gulf do not include Yemen, the country of the Qahtanites. Further sources are beyond my reach due to lack of knowledge of Arabic.

<sup>4</sup> Yitzhak Ratzabi writes that men of the Yemenite community would not shave their genital or axillary hair and that it is forbidden to do so because of cross-dressing (Ratzabi, *Shulhan Arukh ha-Mekutzar* EH vol. 1, 157:2 note 4 [Bnei Brak, 2002] p. 119); compare with Ratzabi’s argument only pages earlier for permitting the use of henna dye for men based upon the geonim’s reasoning that dressing standards are learned from the greater non-Jewish environment (*Shulhan Arukh*

comfortable distinguishing between the view of the geonim and that of Maimonides—reading into the latter, “Maran,” that male body hair depilation is forbidden even if local gentile custom changes.<sup>5</sup> Body grooming was traditionally practiced by women in Yemen,<sup>6</sup> and therefore forbidden for men.

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*ha-Mekutzar*, YD vol. 1, 150:1 note 2 [Bnei Brak, 2000] p. 466). See also sources in following note.

- <sup>5</sup> Yosef Qafih (b. Yemen, d. Israel, 1917-2000), *Mishneh Torah Sefer Maddah*, ed. Y. Qafih, *Avodah Zarah* 12:9 (Mekhon Mishnat ha-Rambam, 2001) p. 562 n. 19; Shlomo Korach, *Sefat Melekh, Laws of Idolatry* 12:9 (Bnei Brak, 1958) pp. 440-441; Ratzon Arusi, “Giluah sei’ar,” *moreshet.co.il*, Ask the Rabbi (Hebrew: 2 Elul, 5768). Note that these scholars were (are) very proud of Yemenite Jewish customs and would have recorded a lenient Yemenite shaving custom if they were aware of it. Their silence is understood in light of Ratzabi’s testimony that no such custom existed.
- <sup>6</sup> See S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The family* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967) p. 128, for mention of a body hair removal specialist for women in Yemen during the Geniza period; Ratzabi, *Shulhan Arukh ha-Mekutzar*, EH vol.1, 158:13 note 18 (Bnei Brak, 2002) p. 137; Y. Ratzabi, *Shulhan Arukh ha-Mekutzar* EH vol. 1, 157:2 note 4 (Bnei Brak, 2002), p. 118 writes that women of Yemen and Sephardic communities were careful to shave their body hair (though Yemenites would not remove axillary hair) before ritual immersion unlike women of Ashkenazi communities. See Ratzon Arusi, “Hasarat sei’ar ervah shel ha-nashim,” *moreshet.co.il*, Ask the Rabbi (Hebrew: 8 Elul, 5772) <<http://shut.moreshet.co.il/shut2.asp?id=155128>>.

## Appendix B

### Hai's Comment to *Mikva'ot* 9:1-2

The contrast between Muslim countries' male shaving practices and European custom can be detected in commentaries written on Mishnah *Mikva'ot* 9:1-2. The Mishnah reads:

אלו חוצצין באדם ... קלקי הלב והזקן, ובית הסתרים באשה.

These intervene [rendering immersion invalid] in the case of a person: ... entangled matted hair over the heart and of the beard and of the secret parts of a woman.<sup>7</sup>

Hai Gaon commented upon the Mishnah as follows:

קלקי הלב . פירוש כל איש שאינו חלק אלא איש שיער יש לו שערות בבית השחי או בלבו והן מתקלקלין ונעשין כקלקין.<sup>8</sup>

“The *kilkei* of the chest”: This means, any man who is not smooth, but rather is a hirsute man will have hair in his armpit or chest and these [hairs] degrade and become matted.

Hai's words, “any man who is not smooth, but rather is a hirsute man,” may be differentiating between body types—a smooth body with only limited and light body hair versus a hairy body—or between men who shave their body hair and those who let it grow out. Because his audience was accustomed to shaving (most of 11<sup>th</sup>-century Jewry lived in lands under Islamic dominion), in order to make the Mishnah understood Hai needed to explain that unkempt, grown-out body hair can become unpleasant and tangled.

Nathan of Rome (c. 1035–1106) considered himself a student of the teachings of Hai,<sup>9</sup> and therefore, the philological material contained in Hai's commentary on the Mishnaic order of *Tabarot*,<sup>10</sup> Nathan absorbed into his *Arukh*. Hai's comments are paraphrased by Nathan:

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<sup>7</sup> *Mishnayot* vol. 6, *Seder Tabarot, Mikva'ot* 9:1-2, transl. Phillip Blackman, (London, 1955), p. 576.

<sup>8</sup> Hai's commentary is found on the side of *mMikva'ot* printed in the back of the standard Vilna Talmud *Niddah* volume.

<sup>9</sup> See I. H. Weiss, “Rav Hai Gaon: shir mussar haskeil,” *Lekutei kadmonim: kovetz shirei meshorarim kadmonim*, vol. 1 (Warsaw: Ahiasaf Publishers, 1893) 22; B. M. Lewin, *Ginzei Kedem* 2 (Haifa, 1922) p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm Bacher, H. G. Enelow, “Nathan ben Jehiel,” *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IX (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1905) p. 180.

קלקי הלב והזקן ובית הסתרים פי' "כל איש שאינו חלוק ויש לו שערות כאיש שעריר בבית השחי או בלבו מודלה מגרונו ויתמאס מן הזיעה והן מתקלקלין נעשין כקלקי." <sup>11</sup>

“The *kilkei* of the chest, beard, and hidden parts of a woman”: This means—any man who is not smooth, but rather has hair like a hirsute man in his armpit or chest, extending from his lower neck area—this [hair] will become disgusting from sweat and degrade, becoming matted.

Next, we find that Hai’s words, through the medium of Nathan’s work, are cited in northern France in the Mishnah commentary of Shimshon of Sens (c. 1150–c. 1230):

קילקי הלב - ... פירש בערוך כל אשה שאינה חלקה ויש לה שערות כאיש שעריר בבית השחי או בלבו מודלה אל גרונו תמאס מן הזיעה והן מתקלקלין ונעשין כקלקי. <sup>12</sup>

“The *kilkei* of the chest”: *Arukh* explained, “any woman who is not smooth, and she has hair like a hirsute man [who has hair in] the armpit or chest, extending from his lower neck area, she will become disgusting from sweat and [this hair will] degrade, becoming matted.

When Hai’s comment, “כל איש שאינו חלק אלא איש שיער,” “any man who is not smooth, but rather is a hirsute man,” reached northern Europe it seemed peculiar to readers. In their world, all men were hairy, so the sentence’s structure which suggests that the standard man is smooth without hair was strange. The text was therefore ‘corrected’ to “כל אשה שאינה חלקה,” “any woman who is not smooth,” as the medieval European woman was expected to keep smooth and hairless.

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<sup>11</sup> *Arukh ha-Shalem (Arukh Completum)*, vol.7, “kilkei (קלקי),” ed. Alexander Kohut (Vienna, 1891) p. 112. See notes 1-2 where Kohut asserts that this passage was taken directly from Hai.

<sup>12</sup> Printed with the endnotes at the end of standard *Niddah* editions. Yaakov Emden remarks that this wording is the correct version of Shimshon’s commentary (*Hagabot Ya’avetz Mikvaot* 9:2 printed in back of the standard Talmud, *Niddah*). Apparently other printings resembled the original wording of Hai (see the abridged commentary of Shimshon of Sens in Asher ben Yehiel [“Rosh”] “*Laws of Mikvaot*” 25, printed in back of the standard Talmud, *Niddah*).

## Appendix C

### Kabbala

Kabbalists assumed that mystical secrets can explain the (then) poorly understood phenomenon of male hair growth. Having attributed hair with deep spiritual meaning, mystics became convinced that body hair should certainly not be removed.

As described above, ancient Greek medical theories, repeated in the medieval period, attributed growth of hair in men to excess internal body heat.<sup>13</sup> Constantine the African (11<sup>th</sup> century) wrote:

Warmth increases desire and masculinity ... If a man has warm testicles ... his pubic hair will appear at the right time, and also the hair on the rest of his body. But men with cold testicles will be effeminate and ... their hair will appear late...<sup>14</sup>

Thomas of Cantimpre (in present-day Belgium, 1201–1272) wrote, “A great beard is born from superfluidities in hot men, a smaller one in cool [men].”<sup>15</sup> Juan Huarte (1529–588) wrote, “For all Physicians (=physicians) affirme, that the haire and beard are engendered of heat and drinesse (=dryness).”<sup>16</sup> Levinus Lemnius (1505–1568) wrote of the important link between male body heat and growth of hair:

It is therefore by reason of heat that men bee hayrie and bolder than woman bee... the hotter of complexion therefore that every man is, and further off from moderate temperature, the hayrier is his body: ... some that not onely in their outward parts, but in their very Entrailes and inward parts, also have beene found rough and hayrie.<sup>17</sup>

The common belief in men’s excessive heat and moisture as the cause of male hair growth influenced the thinking of kabbalists and their perception of male body hair. Kabbalists used this ancient belief as a platform to ascribe supernatural secrets to male hair growth. Elaborating upon the scientific understanding, Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto (Italy, 1707–1746)

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<sup>13</sup> See Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge, England; Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 181-184.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Delany, “Constantinus Africanus’ ‘De Coitu’: A Translation,” pp. 57-58.

<sup>15</sup> Cited and translated in Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference*, 181-184.

<sup>16</sup> Huarte de San Juan, *The Examination of Men’s Wits*, trans. Richard Carew (1594) p. 277.

<sup>17</sup> Levinus Lemnius, *The Touchstone of Complexions: Expedient and profitable for all such as bee desirous and careful of their bodily health*, Englished by Thomas Newton (London, 1633), pp. 68-69.

"כי השערות יוצאים מהחום של הגוף והוא סוד הגבורה... ואז יוצאין בחינת wrote, "hairs arise from the body's heat— this is the secret of might ..."<sup>18</sup> attributing a mystical secret's involvement behind this heat causing hair growth.

Kabbalists believed that this biological-kabbalistic secret force demanded that male body hair not be removed. Moshe Cordovero (Safed, 1522–1570), discussing pubic and armpit hair, wrote, "כי סוד השער הזה בא" <sup>19</sup> "the secret [power] of said hair originates from the lofty heat of might [which] contains pure judgment abilities; therefore, it is forbidden to remove these [hairs]." Cordovero renamed the scientific male body heat with the mystical sounding words, "the lofty heat of might," thereby being able to inform readers that this lofty power source which hair is linked with has "pure judgment abilities." Likewise, Tzadok Rabinowitz (Lublin, 1823–1900) wrote in a description of pubic and axillary hair, "וידוע שכל שערות" הוא מצד מותרות הלחיות שבפנים כי יש בהם מותרות ... ובזכרים אסור לגלחם כי "it is known that all hair originates from excess internal moisture [for the body]

<sup>18</sup> Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, *Adir ba-Marom* (Warsaw, 1886) pp. 40a, 41b-42a.

<sup>19</sup> Moshe Cordovero, *Eilima Rabbati, ma'ayan 4, Ein Shemesh Tamar 6*, chapter 15 (Brody, 1881) pp. 147b-148a:

"כי סוד השער הזה בא מצד חום הגבורה העליונה והם כחות הדין טהורים. ולכך אסור להעבירם... ובנקבה להם דרך אחרת שאינם בה אלא לרעה.... אמנם הנה דרך העברה היא סוד כרות שפכה ואותם הכחות הם גורמים זה אמנם הכחות שבזכר סביב אל האמה נקרא זקן התחתון הוא סוד ב' שערות. והענין כי הדרת זקן עליון הוא תלויה באמה והדרת זקן התחתון גם כן תלויה בסריס והכל ענין א' הסוד.... והנה זקן העליון גורם לתחתון ומי שאין לו ב' שערות אלו הנז' הוא סריס כאשר אין לו הדרת זקן... לכך זה תלוי בזה ולכך כמו שאין ראוי להעביר הדרת זקן כך אין ראוי להעביר שער התחתון בזכר שהם קדושים נותנים כח אל הזיווג כנז', ופ' עוד משתתף העטרה רצו בזה שהזקן העליון מתתקן מן הכתר ... והעטרה הזאת היא מסוד עטרה דהיינו סוד עטרת המילה שאינה כתר אלא עטרה.... ולכך מעטרים סביב המקום שהיא שלטת עטרת ת"ת כשנודע, ולכך שיעורם (=של חז"ל) באיברי ההולדה דוקא מפני שתלוי סודם במקום מראהו כלבנון... ובסוד זה הוא שער בית השחי... וגם כן אסור להעבירם מן הטעם הזה... והמעביר פוגם זה."

<sup>20</sup> Tzadok Rabinowitz, *Dover Tzudek* (Bnei Brak, 1973) p. 108:

"ולכך מדבר משחיו כי יש שייכות בית השחי אל בית הערוה כמו שכתבתי במקום אחר על מאמרם ז"ל (נזיר נ"ח ב) שאסור לגלח בית השחי ובית הערוה. ושכונות ישראל אין להם שערות של בית השחי ובית הערוה. כי בית הערוה הוא בין הוצאות פרקי הרגלים מן הגוף. ובית השחי הוצאות הידים מהגוף. ושניהם כוחות הפועלים. רק הרגלים בהתפשטות מה שחוץ לגוף והידים בהתפשטות אצל הגוף. ובשניהם יש שערות וידוע שכל שערות הוא מצד מותרות הלחיות שבפנים [ולכך כל שערות רומז דין] כי יש בהם מותרות. רק בנות ישראל אין להם [ובזכרים אסור לגלחם כי באמת המותרות שלו דבוק בקדושה וכמו שכתבתי במקום אחר בסוד הפיאות]."

has excess [moisture]... men are forbidden from removing this hair because their excess [moisture] is linked with holiness as I described elsewhere regarding the secret of the sidecurls.” He attributed “holiness” to the excess body fluid from which the hair was thought to be born—and explained that this secretive “holiness” forbids the body hairs’ removal. The modern rationalist may consider whether these esoteric powerful secrets, allegedly associated with male hair, have since dissipated together with their outdated scientific foundational notions of the cause of hair growth.

Others kabbalistic works, including those attributed to Yitzhak Luria (d. Safed, 1534–1572), Hayyim Vital (Safed, 1542–1620), and Naftali Hertz Bacharach (17<sup>th</sup>-century Germany), similarly expounded upon the deep *remeẓ* of the “lower beard.”<sup>21</sup> Vital and Bacharach describing great mystical secrets, wrote that “the beard of the *ze’eir anpin* was formed from the lower beard (pubic hair) of the *arikh anpin* by means of a great mystical secret upon which 13 covenants were concluded.”<sup>22</sup> For believers in Lurianic wisdom these words surely imputed pubic hair with special hidden meaning.

<sup>21</sup> Yitzhak Luria cited in Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad, *Torah Lishma* (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 156. Yosef Hayyim wrote:

“מיהו מצאתי כתוב דע”פ הסוד יש ליוהר שלא להסיר שער זקן התחתון מפני שיש בו רמז... ולכן ראוי שגם בזקן התחתון של אדם התחתון לא תגע בו יד להעביר השער לא במספרים ולא בסם והמשכיל יבין מדעתו כי א”א אלהי הרחוב הדברים יותר.”

“However, I have found that according to mystical lore one should not remove the pubic hair as it contains a secret ... Therefore it is befitting that the pubic hair [just as the facial hair] not be removed, not with a scissors or a depilatory cream. The wise one will understand on his own as I cannot elaborate further.”

<sup>22</sup> Hayyim Vital, *Eitz Hayyim*, vol. 1, 4:16:5 (Jerusalem, 1988) p. 242:

“ועיין בביאור מצות שעטנז חטא קין והבל בהקריבם צמר ופשתים ושם תבין דיקנא דז”א (=זעיר אנפין) שנאצלה מצמר הכבש העליון שהוא הדעת דדיקנא עלאה שהוא הזקן התחתון שבא”א (=אריך אנפין) סביב לאות ברית קדש דא”א בסוד גדולה מילה שנכרתו עליה י”ג בריתות וז”ס הפסוק מן המצר קראתי י”ה הנאמר על דיקנא דז”א שהוא מצ”ר דנפיק מן צמ”ר העליון שהוא סוד אותן שערות לבנות שסביב ברית קודש דא”א וכבר ידעת כי דיקנא דא”א כל שערותיו לבנים כמ”ש ושער ראשו כעמר נקא והוא הצמר הנ”ל.”

“See the explanation of the commandment of *shaatnez* regarding the sin of Kayin and Hevel for sacrificing wool with linen. From there you shall understand that the beard of the *ze’eir anpin* was taken from the wool of the upper sheep which signifies the intellect of the upper beard which is the lower beard (pubic hair) of the *arikh anpin* surrounding the *brit kodesh* (male sex organ). This contains a great mystical secret of *milah* upon which 13 covenants were performed. The verse, ‘In distress (*meitzar*) I called on the Lord,’ (Psalms 118:5 JPS), according to *sod*

Bahya ben Asher (Spain, 1255-1340) wrote that the ‘lower beard’ is mystically linked with the facial beard by the letters of God’s name, suggesting that there is something Godly in masculine body hair and therefore erasing either beard is like erasing God’s name. He found biological support for this mystical link in that eunuchs and woman are both unable to grow facial hair.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Cordovero wrote that the eunuch’s inability

interpretation, refers to the beard of the *ze’ir anpin* which is the *meitzar* originating from the upper wool — containing the secret of the white hairs which surround the *brit kodesh* (male sex organ). You already know that the hairs of the beard of the *arikh anpin* are all white as the verse states “the hair of His head was like lamb’s wool” (Daniel 7:9 JPS) – a reference to the abovementioned wool. See Naftali Hertz Bacharach, *Eimek ha-Melekh*, vol. 1, 68 (Amsterdam, 1648), p. 163b – Bacharach seems to paraphrase (plagiarize?) the words of *Eitz Hayyim*. See Yeshaya Horowitz, *Shnei Lubot ha-Brit*, letter *kuf* (Fyurda, 1764) p. 72, that every hair is a universe to itself and is a conduit of spiritual powers.

<sup>23</sup> *Rabbeinu Bahya: Biur al ha-Torah*, ed. H. D. Chavel, vol. 2, Lev. 19:27 (Jerusalem: Kook, 2006) p. 532:

"וע"ד הקבלה: טעם איסור ההשחתה לפי שאותיות ההוי"ה של השם הנעלם רשמו בתבנית הגוף: ה"ו"ד והה"א והוא"ו במילה ובפה ובלשון, וזהו איסור השחתת זקן העליון וזקן התחתון כי האיסור שוה בהם. והתבונן נפלאות אל כי כן חכמי הטבע כתבו בספריהם כי מקומות ששויים הם בצמיחת שערות יש שכונה ויחס ביניהם, וגידין יוצאין ממקום זה למקום זה, וכשיצמח שער במקום זה יצמח בזה, ומטעם זה אין לנשים ולסריסים זקן מפני שהשכונה הזאת תחסר מהם ואין בהם גידין יוצאין ממקום זה למקום זה, ומפני שמצינו בשני מקומות האלה השויה ואחדות, והנה הם רמז וציוור לאחדות, אמרו רז"ל: לעולם יקדש אדם את עצמו בשעת תשמיש. והמצוה אזהרה למוחק אותיות השם, וזה מבואר."

"According to kabbalistic teachings: The name of God is imprinted in the body. The *yud*, *bei*, and *vav* are represented in the male organ, mouth, and tongue. This is why both upper and lower beards have prohibitions against shaving. Understand the wonders of God – for scientists have written similarly in their works. Areas of the body which produce hair have similarities, and they are linked by cords. Thereby, when hair grows in one area it grows in the other area as well. It is for this reason women and eunuchs do not grow beards: they both lack the [heavy (?) pubic hair source] and also lack the cords connecting [the pubic and facial regions]. Because these two regions are unified [scientifically] and represent unity [of God] our sages taught, “a man should always sanctify himself during intercourse,” the intent being to not erase God’s name [in the way described above] – this is clear.”

Bahya’s contemporary and co-student under Shlomo ben Aderet, Shem Tov ben Abraham ibn Gaon, (b. Soria, Spain, 1283-ca. 1330) likely had these same mystical ideas in mind when he penned the following (*Migdal Oz* on *Code, Laws of Idolatry* 12:9):

"העברת השער משאר הגוף כו' עד בכ"מ. הלכה זו עיקרה פ' שני נזירים ומ"מ יש מחמירין בדבר וחולקין בכמה ענינים אבל כתבו רבותינו נ"ע משעמדנו על דעתנו לא העברנו ברזל על בשרנו אפילו מספרים כלל וכלל לא בראש ולא בגוף מן השפה ולחוץ."



to produce facial hair demonstrates that the two “beards” are mystically linked by a kabbalistic *sod* and therefore neither should be shaven.<sup>24</sup>

It may be no surprise that rabbis known primarily as kabbalists chose to interpret Maimonides stringently. From the inner circle around Luria, Vital, and Cordovero, we find Safed kabbalist Elazar Azikri explaining that Maimonides in fact forbade male body hair removal even if the local custom of men is to depilate.<sup>25</sup> Kabbalist Avraham Azulai (b. Fez, d. Hebron, c. 1570–1643), who expounded upon the mystical significance of body hair in his kabbalistic work *Hesed le-Avraham*,<sup>26</sup> interpreted Maimonides strictly in his halakhic writings.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the kabbalistic leanings of these authors influenced their readings of Maimonides – their thinking being: surely the great Maimonides would not discourage men from availing themselves of the “holy” mystical benefits that come with body hair.

The kabbalistic ethical work *Hemdat Yamim* similarly discouraged any form of male body hair shaving, interpreted Maimonides stringently,<sup>28</sup> and strongly disapproved of pubic shaving specifically, but for a very different reason:

Even he who allows himself to remove axillary hair should not be lenient with removal of pubic hair with a razor. [This is because,] besides the prohibition against cross-dressing, the forbidden [act of] intentional self-stimulation is also implicated.... One who is protective of his spirituality will distance himself from such conduct all his days, and certainly before the great and awesome day of God (=

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“This law’s source is in the chapter “*Shnei Nezirim*” [*Nazir* 59a]; however, some are stringent in this matter and disagree upon many points. Our teachers wrote that when [we reached intellectual maturity] we did not pass an iron [blade] over our skin at all, even [if the blade was merely] a scissor – not upon our heads or our bodies from the moustache and outwards.”

These words suggest that at an early stage of intellectual development (i.e., before they were influenced by kabbala teachings) his teachers *did* shave their body hair. Perhaps this can be attributed to a lingering influence of Islam in Catalonia.

<sup>24</sup> Moshe Cordovero, *Eilima Rabbati*, pp. 147b-148a.

<sup>25</sup> Azikri, *Hareidim im biur ba'eir yehuda*, negative commandment 5:69 (Jerusalem, 1965) p. 125.

<sup>26</sup> *Hesed le-Avraham* 2:59 (Vilna, 1877) pp. 38-39, “סביב הצדיק,” understood as a euphemism; *ibid.*, 7:13, p. 114.

<sup>27</sup> Avraham Azulai, *Hagaot Moreinu Avraham Azulai* to Mordechai Yoffe, *Levush: Ateret Zahav*, YD 154:2 (Jerusalem: Zikhron Aaron, 2000) p. 340.

<sup>28</sup> *Hemdat Yamim*, vol. 3, 5:72 (Bnei Brak: Makhon Hemdat Yamim, 2011) p. 94; *ibid.* vol.1, 3:108, p. 76.

Sabbath); as the early ones wrote, each Jewish man must be meticulous in his ways [before the Sabbath] and be extra careful not to separate himself from connecting to God, on the Sabbath even more so than on other days. He should also be stringent [in preparation for this day] even in cases of only suspected transgressions.<sup>29</sup>

Like many other kabbalists and Sabbatians, the author possessed an excessive worry over possible “spilling of seed.”<sup>30</sup> The author apparently overlooked the absence of this concern in the lenient ruling of the geonim, and did not notice that even Rabi Yoḥanan of the Talmud, who forbade male body hair removal, only did so because it fit into the prohibition of cross-dressing.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Hemdat Yamim*, vol. 1, 3:109 (Bnei Brak: Mekhon Hemdat Yamim, 2011) p. 76: "ואף המקל בעצמו להעביר שער בית השחי לא יקל בשער בית הערוה להעבירו בתער, כי מבלעדי איסור לא ילבש כרוך אחריו איסור מקשה עצמו לדעת ושיחת ארצה וכבר אמרו האוחז באמה ומשתין וכו', וכל שכן דאיכא משום איסור המסתכל בקשת וכו', ושומר נפשו ירחק ממנו כל הימים וביותר לפני בא יום ה' הגדול והנורא (= שבת) כמ"ש הראשונים שצריך כל אחד מאישי ישראל להיות מדקדק במעשיו, ויותר ירא ויחרד שלא יצא חוצה מדביקות השם יתברך בשבת טפי משאר הימים וגם יחמיר יותר בספק ספיקא באיסורין"

<sup>30</sup> For references to further discussions of this topic by *Hemdat Yamim* and other kabbalistic works see Shilo Pachter, “Shmirat Habrit: The History of the Prohibition of Wasting Seed” (in Hebrew) (PhD Diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2006) pp. 227-235; *ibid.*, pp. 119-169 for the excessive attention to this topic in the kabbala literature.

<sup>31</sup> The reason sexual misconduct is not of halakhic concern here is that when handling sharp or caustic (e.g. lime) materials in close vicinity of sensitive organs the concept of "כיון דבעיתי לא אתי להרהורי", “because one is nervous he will not come to fantasize,” surely applies (see *Niddah* 13a).